

ARTGAZE

townsville's arts magazine

spring 2010



Includes
FREE
Art Guide

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**trans
verse**



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TransVerse is an international digital art exhibition that presents works by artists concerned with traversing the distance between the language of virtual and physical landscapes.

TransVerse is an exhibition established in conjunction with International Digital Art Projects (IDAprojects) and the QUT Creative Industries Precincts.



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note from the editor

This issue is filled with local art, national events and a story from London. I had the fortunate opportunity to attend the 2010 Sydney Biennale, which was intriguing and filled me with inspiration and motivation to create more artwork, so I couldn't resist sharing my highlights in this issue. I also asked young artist, Jordan Grant, to share his highlights, as he also attended the Biennale after receiving the Matt Clarke Travelling Scholarship.

Congratulations to the artists of Townsville's newest art space, Studio 2 (next to Umbrella Studios), who had a massive response to their opening in August.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the development of *Art Gaze*.

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front cover

Scene from *Spamalot*, James Raggatt in front as Not Dead Fred, 2010, Courtesy of Townsville Choral Society, Detail of photograph by Sonia Warrell

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Rohan Wealleans, *He with Glands of Wasp* (detail), 2009, polystyrene, fibreglass, paint and shark jaw, 208 x 118 x 61 cm, Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Photograph: Sam Hartnett



Uli Liessmann, *Suddenly It Got Dark*, 2010, Oil on paper, 110 x 150 cm, Courtesy of the artist



Lynda Tama in *Spamalot*, Courtesy of Townsville Choral Society, Detail of photograph by Sonia Warrell

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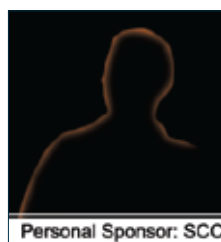
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Short fiction by Anita Berry

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Short fiction by Kerry Ashwin



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Slave Pianos, Formed in 1998. Danius Kesminas, Rohan Drape, Neil Kelly and David Nelson live and work in Melbourne, Australia; Michael Stevenson lives and works in Berlin, Germany, *The Fatal Score* or *The Spectacle of the Scaffold (The Way Up and the Way Down are One and the Same)*, 2010, performance on Cockatoo Island for the 17th Biennale of Sydney (2010), Photograph: Robert Pavlacic

Highlights from the 17th Biennale of Sydney



Daniel Crooks, *Title Static No. 12 (seek stillness in movement)*, 2009-10 (video still), HD video (RED transferred to Blu-ray), dimensions variable, Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

JAK HENSON

The 2010 Sydney Biennale included a large amount of video art, and although I have heard others comment there was too much video, the Biennales are known for their new media and 2010 didn't disappoint. My only recommendation would be to stay in Sydney long enough to allow time to view all the video work. It is constantly a struggle to decide which videos to commit your time to, resulting in the inevitable disappointment later when reading the catalogue as to whose work you've missed. So I just wanted to take the opportunity to share two of my many artwork highlights.

The first is video artist, Daniel Crooks' *Static No. 12*. Although I was familiar with this work, I had not seen it in its entirety and fortunately entered the space just as the video began. The slow movements of the figure are systematic and hypnotic and as the frame is slowly filled with static imagery of the figure's past movements, I wondered how

Crooks would loop or end the video. I had concerning ideas that the video would reach a point in which it began playing in reverse until there was no static figure left on the screen. I was relieved to find that once the imagery filled the screen it merged into lines of colour before eventually fading, then the video looped. The video was a reasonable length and did not allow the audience time to get bored with the imagery, but simply be absorbed by the video.

The second work that I would refer to as a highlight was *Slave Pianos*. While on Cockatoo Island, I entered one of the large industrial buildings (Turbine Hall) to hear piano music. As I was still absorbing the history of the industrial buildings and the island as a convict precinct, I imagined the site deserted with convicts on the higher level of the island and piano music flowing through the building where I was standing, which created an eerie atmosphere. Once I

finally reached the piano, I discovered that it was about to be hanged. *Slave Pianos*, as the Free Guide outlines,

present a surrealist allegory of convict transportation in which a piano is absurdly found guilty of treachery and executed at the penal establishment of Cockatoo Island.

The piano plays, while it is waiting to be hanged, and a video screen, attached to the timber structure that holds the piano, includes imagery and a voice-over of the sentence and the wake that follows the execution.

I would recommend a visit to the next Biennale of Sydney, including Cockatoo Island, to anyone interested in the arts, architecture or history.

For more Biennale information, visit:
<http://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/>

The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing

an afternoon tea with Hannah Bertram

SARAH BALL

As a young artist, recently arrived in Townsville from Sydney, I was delighted to hear that well-known Melbourne-based artist Hannah Bertram was in town, working on one of her ephemeral dust installations as part of her touring project in Australia, *The Silence of Becoming and Disappearing*.

Hannah Bertram completed her Master of Fine Art at Melbourne's RMIT in 2005, and has exhibited extensively, both nationally and internationally. Her work utilises materials that are often overlooked or discarded in our culture, encouraging her audience to revisit traditional notions of value, uncover the poetry of the everyday, and reclaim our detritus as significant—to even beautiful.

For Hannah's current project, she is invited into private homes to install her work, leaving it up to the occupants, and the elements, to dictate how long

the dust work will stay in its place. It is also up to the residents to indicate who the audience will be. In collaboration with Umbrella Studio, Hannah's work was created on 3 June at the Sulphur Crest Guest House on Stagpole St, with guests invited for afternoon tea.

On the afternoon of the gathering, my partner and I arrived outside the majestic old guest house. The sky was moody, threatening a storm. Several kids and a cluster of adults were gathered in the front yard around a table of fruit and drinks. We wandered past the old iron gate and entered the house. The front room was elaborate in a Victorian way. Heavy dark wooden furniture adorned the room, with open French doors leading onto the front verandah. The ceiling was high, ornately decorated with plaster relief, a crystal chandelier at its centre. There was evidence of Hannah's working process gathered at the back of the room;

cardboard stencils meticulously cut, and plastic bags, just transparent enough to see their bulging contents of collected dust in shades of soft brown, white and ochre.

At the front of the room, Hannah's work sat subtly under two antique armchairs, covering the timber floor—it is the nature of her work that it is present, but easily missed, in a dance between the visible and the invisible. Under the chairs, Hannah had stencilled in dust, without use of fixative, elaborate patterns of Australian native plants. The shades of dust were layered, creating a complexity of patterning that Hannah later explained was her way of avoiding referencing the stencilled wall-decals of folk craft.

Her two works spanned approximately 1 square metre under each chair, creeping tentatively from the shadows towards the open French doors, where



Hannah Bertram collecting material to create installation in Townsville, Courtesy of the artist

the breeze entering the room threatened the fragile work. Hannah later explained that she had placed the work under the furniture, leaving the central spaces of the room unmarked, in a way that mimics the gradual deterioration of carpets after years of use, while areas around and under furniture, less traversed, maintain pristine patterns and plush surfaces.

It is Hannah's intention that her work be impermanent, calling into question our notions of preciousness in relation to adornment. Here, Hannah takes something we habitually ignore, or, at best, neurotically banish from our domestic environments to maintain a façade of the immaculate home: dust—a material that echoes of decay, of things past. Hannah gathers most of her material on-site, drawing our attention to the temporality of our everyday, lived experience, and the hierarchy of values we attribute to materials.

After coffee and snacks were offered, we gathered in the front room, where Hannah gave us a brief talk about

her work. Vicki Salisbury, Director of Umbrella Studio, introduced Hannah with a background on her current project, and how it was that she had chosen this particular house in Townsville as one of the twelve homes she would work in during her project in 2010. Hannah explained that she was drawn to the fact that a guest house is a place where the residents are impermanent, much like her work, and is interested in the way her installations might shift in an environment where temporality is an integral part of the domestic environment.

Hannah gave us a demonstration of her process on the polished wood floor, as we hovered around on hands and knees. The simplicity of her technique was striking. Tea strainers and fine metal sieves she had made herself from found materials were dipped into the bags of dust and gently tapped over the cardboard stencil, settling into the vacant spaces. She gently lifted the stencil away, revealing the intricate patterns; then, with great care, lined up the next stencil over the first layer

of dust, and continued her layering using the different hues. Finally, when the work was complete, the small gathering closed in on the work, chatting animatedly over its delicacy and beauty. In the pleasure of seeing this subtle work emerge in front of us, many didn't notice Hannah approaching, dustpan in hand, ready to sweep away the traces of her demonstration.

'No! You can't destroy it! Its so beautiful', one of the women lamented.

Reflecting on this comment later, it seems to me to highlight the powerful dichotomy inherent in Hannah Bertram's work. By drawing our attention so acutely to the detail of her painstaking process and, in doing so, challenging us to question our assumptions of beauty, permanence and value, Hannah implores us to look closely, to savour and appreciate these fragile forms ... and then let go.



Hannah Bertram, *The silence of becoming and disappearing*, Installation view at the Sulphur Crest Guest House, Townsville, Courtesy of Umbrella Studios, Photograph: Vicki Salisbury

Matt Clarke Travelling Scholarship

Jordan Grant's Biennale experience

The Matt Clarke Travelling Scholarship was received by three young artists in 2010 to travel outside Townsville to an art event for professional development. The recipients were Jordan Grant, receiving \$500 to attend the Sydney Biennale, and Kyana Pike and John Bradshaw, who each received \$250 to attend the Canberra Print Symposium.

Kyana and John are yet to travel to Canberra; however, on Jordan's return, I had a chance to ask him about his travels.

What was the highlight of the trip?

Cockatoo Island, being a major venue for the Biennale, was a huge highlight for me. The entire island had been taken over by artists, who filled the warehouses and rooms with everything from sculpture and painting to video screening. I took particularity to the works by New Zealand artist Rohan Wealleans, who created a series of sculptures around 1.5 metres tall, which were hybrids of different animals, fashioned in a human-like stance and covered in interesting patterns and jewels. They seemed to have a child-like innocence to their figure, yet their decorative elements showed overtones of mystery and spirituality.

How did this impact on your arts practice?

The Biennale covered Sydney's large arts venues, such as the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Museum of Contemporary Art, but I was also able to visit other galleries nearby, which I follow closely online, such as Monster Children and May's Lane, and was introduced to new galleries like Chalk Horse and White Rabbit. These experiences provided me with fresh inspiration and energy to push myself, and since I've been back I have been sketching down ideas in any spare moment I get. I plan to implement these sketches into larger works and collaborate with artists around me to share the experience and the motivation it gave me.

Anything else you would like to add?

I would like to again thank Matt's family, the organising body for the scholarship, and all the donors who generously

gave money to commemorate Matt and provide young artists like myself with fantastic opportunities to travel and view art from outside this region.



Rohan Wealleans, *Janicot Vader*, 2009, polystyrene, fibreglass, paint, shark jaw and fabric, 237 x 104 x 70 cm, Installation view of the 17th Biennale of Sydney (2010) at Cockatoo Island, Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Photograph: Sebastian Kriete

Nocturnal

A Dark Park Cabaret

AARON ASHLEY

It's not everyday you walk into a heritage building and are greeted by street art, slowly rotating projections, stages on all sides, dry ice flowing eerily and electronic music thumping in the background, but that's exactly what was in store for the audiences who attended Full Throttle's production *Nocturnal*.

As Director Karen Gibb notes, '*Nocturnal* came about through two sentences. "God this town is so boring. Where are all the interesting young artists?" ' She then spent six weeks roaming the city after dark and found everybody from drag queens, street artists and burlesque dancers to a wide range of independent musicians and emerging fashion designers. It's of huge credit to Full Throttle that they got such a wide variety of performers working together in the one show.

Equally impressive as the line-up of performers was the space itself. The Court Theatre was transformed through clever stage placement, wall-to-wall street art and coloured spotlights into an atmospheric underground scene befitting of the content. The talented electronic duo, The Popli Kids, were set up on a stage at the back of the room, with enough synthesiser action to keep everybody happily drifting into a cosmic land of disjointed pop between main stage performances.

Also playing between performances and lending some contrast to The Popli Kids were electronic duo, Psycho Decay, set up on a small stage to the right side of the room, giving the crowd a taste of some experimental/industrial sounds reminiscent of Nine Inch Nails and Infected Mushroom. As a colleague aptly said of their stage presence, 'If they had been wearing panda costumes, it would've gone from pretty good to amazing'.

The main stage began with Trinity Kin-Kee giving a drag performance of

'Natural Women', followed up by band 'al goregasm', who had some good guitar and drums riffs. Burlesque Life Modelling followed shortly after, with some pretty amazing costuming, but as a solo act seemed a bit out place and would have benefited from an accompanying musician. Also in the first half were Rita Neale and Tania Carmichael performing the Dresden Dolls' hit 'Girl Anachronism', Health performing some great finger-picking acoustic guitar work, a dramatic drag performance to Evanescence's 'My Immortal' and original fashion and wearable art design from a number of local emerging designers.

After a brief interval, there was a distinct change of pace as the show recommenced with the beautifully peaceful melodic vocals and guitar work of Kate Martin. The melodic vocals continued and the guitar shifted to piano with Elle Graham's performance, who had one of her songs accompanied by dancer Nicola Santarossa to great effect. I also thought that the use of the theme song from the movie *Amelie* was a nice bridge between Elle's own compositions.

Taking the vocals into a different realm, by not using backing music or a microphone, was Rita Neale. She returned to stage with a violin that was used only as a lead-in prop to an emotionally charged, powerful rendition of Death Cab for Cutie's 'I'll Follow You Into the Dark'. The next act featured Sabrina Dervis and Calla Miller doing quirky, dark and humorous burlesque that really got the audience's attention and made perfect use of the lighting and 'Killer' music.

Bobby Pin Wheel showed us the power of beat boxing, bringing many smiles to the crowd. The presence of his henchman Smiley, donned with trench coat, hat and sunglasses and a white mask with painted smile, didn't go



astray either. Buttah and The Aktivist followed and had their work cut out for them as microphone problems that had been happening throughout the night reached critical mass. Fortunately, they didn't let it stand in their way and still did hip-hop justice with a fantastically cheeky song about an unfaithful girlfriend.

Nocturnal definitely filled an important gap in Townsville by bringing independent young artists together in a professional venue and in front of a different audience. The set/space design by The Run Crew deserves to be lauded, as does the concept and direction by Karen Gibb. Given the difficulty of the space, Kryspi did a solid job as lighting designer, stage manager and audio engineer (the electronic music did sound amazing). There were a few small hitches, but overall it was fantastic and by far one of the most interesting productions Townsville has had to offer. I certainly hope they do it again next year.



Popli Kids, *Nocturnal*, 2010, Photograph: Aaron Asley

art+place forum

JAK HENSON

The curatorial panel from Arts Queensland's **art+place** Queensland Public Art Fund recently visited Townsville to inform local artists and organisations about the opportunity to apply for public art funding. **art+place** has received funding of \$10 million dollars to develop public art across Queensland over the next four years, and the panel encourages artists to become involved in the planning, design and construction of projects.

Held at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in July, the event and curatorial panel was introduced by Arts Queensland Acting Government Curator, Robyn Daw. The panel includes: the expertise of Gold

Coast Art Gallery Curator Virginia Rigby; Julie Ewington, head of Australian Art at the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art; artist and Lecturer Dr Leah King-Smith; artist and Deputy Director, Cairns Regional Gallery, Brian Robinson; Executive Director, Planning Policy, Growth Management Queensland, Michael Papageorgiou; and Landscape Architect, John Lombard.

The event had a promising audience of both local artists and architects, understanding there are a variety of skills required to develop public art. As outlined by the panel, public art projects have a complexity of deadlines across a variety of fields, concerning artistic development, engineering, construction, safety, etc. Part of the **art+place** concept is that public art should relate to the space that surrounds it and have some relevance to the identity of the place. It should also have a strong public engagement and (sadly) must be able to withstand vandalism.

art+place also has a focus on temporary works that have potential to create a legacy in their region. It was highlighted at the seminar that Townsville is an ideal region for public art projects. The success of *Strand Ephemera* shows that the local community is not only accepting of, but enjoys engaging with public art, having major support for the People's Choice award. It was suggested that artists may be able to gauge the kind of artwork that the community would support as a permanent piece, by response to works in *Strand Ephemera*.

Successful applications in Townsville include funding for part of the Flinders Street redevelopment, a current project by Queensland Health and the Solar Cities project on Magnetic Island.

For more information about **art+place**, visit: <http://www.arts.qld.gov.au/funding/pub-art-funds.html>.

Art Guide for SPRING

Exhibition openings

Performances / Presentation

Workshops

Date	Event Style	Title / Details	Place	Time
3	Exhibition Opening	Xstrata Percival Portrait Award Townsville's major biennial portraiture exhibition. Exhibiting until 28 November	Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	7 pm
4	Lecture	<i>What makes a good portrait? Portraiture PowerPoint with Andrew Sayers AM Former Director of the National Portrait Gallery</i>	Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	10.30 am
4	Floor Talk	<i>Judge Andrew Sayers AM will discuss entries in the Xstrata Percival Portrait Award</i>	Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	11.30 am
10	Exhibition Opening	Photographic Portraits Australian Institute of Professional Photographers Exhibiting until 28 November	Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	6.30 pm
14	PechaKucha	<i>PechaKucha Night 20x20. 20 images for 20 seconds by a number of participating artists in the Xstrata Percival Portrait Award</i>	Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	6.00 pm
17	Exhibition Opening	Totems – A symbolic representation of a group Fibres and Fabrics Association Inc. Exhibitiion until 17 October	Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	11.00 am
17	Exhibition Opening	Tropical Friday, themed exhibition by local artists. To be opened by Mary Vernon Exhibiting until 17 October	Sylvia Ditchburn Fine Art Gallery 7 Metro Quays, 86 Ogden Street Townsville	6 pm light refreshments
18 & 19	Workshop	Silk Painting with Linda Jackson	Studio Downstairs, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	10 am – 4 pm
19	Concert - classical	Tango for three	Court Theatre, Cnr Sturt & Stokes Street	3 pm
25 & 26	Workshop	Wire sculpture workshop with Alan Valentine	Studio Downstairs, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	10 am – 4 pm



Spamalat, 2010. Detail of photograph by Sonia Warrell, Courtesy of Townsville Choral Society

September

Cost	Contact
FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
FREE	4724 3953 Sylvia.ditchburn@bigpond.com.au
Members \$150 Non-members \$180	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au
Tickets \$15, \$10 Memb/ conc, \$5 school aged students	47211771 www.musiccentrenq.net
Members \$100 Non-members \$130	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au



Kate Martin, *Nocturnal*, 2010. Detail of photograph: Aaron Ashley

Art Guide for SPRING

Exhibition openings

Performances / Presentations

Workshops

Date	Event Style	Title / Details
2	Concert - jazz	Misinterpretato
8	Exhibition Opening & auction	<i>Compact Prints 2010 Umbrella's trademark biennial exhibition showcasing North Queensland's printmaking talent alongside national and international artists, made up of 126 traditional and digital prints uniformly displayed in 12 cm x 12 cm CD cases. Includes Opening Night Auction of more than 100 prints. Exhibiting until 7 November</i>
8	Exhibition Opening	Students In-Case An exhibition that showcases prints by senior art students from the region. The range of new media and traditional prints are also displayed in CD cases. Exhibiting until 7 November
8	Visual art exhibition Opening	<i>Duality Pauline Leeman and Emma Hill showcase a collaboration of skill, concept, materials, a love of practice and a lot of fun Exhibiting until 7 November.</i>
9 & 10	Workshop	<i>Wire sculpture workshop with Alan Valentine #2</i>
12	Artist Forum	Face-off Forum Three way in-conversation session between an artist, their sitter and Gallery Director, Frances Thomson
20	Exhibition Opening	<i>Townsville Young Artists Awards Exhibiting until 31 October</i>
20	Exhibition Opening	<i>I Degree Youth Exhibition for Townsville Artists aged 18-28 Exhibiting until 31 October</i>
16 & 23	Workshop	Artist books with Jill O'Sullivan using CD cases
30 & 31	Workshop	<i>Portfolio boxes with Margaret Robertson</i>

Date	Event Style	Title / Info
5	Exhibition Opening	Visual Arts Students Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE Annual Exhibition Exhibiting until 21 November
6, 7 & 13, 14	Workshop	Sugarlift Aquatint Copper Sulphate Etching with Zinc with Jo Lankester Discover etching with zinc in copper sulphate (salt). Etch using the intaglio process of sugarlift to produce a rich aquatint without rosin or spray paint. You will achieve a quality etching and produce a limited edition over four, five hour sessions.
12	Visual art exhibition Opening	Evolve 2010 Members' Exhibition For this year's members' exhibition members are asked to submit a work that involves the concept of Evolution; the process by which something simple becomes more complex. Works can be in any medium and "Evolve" can be interpreted in the artists own way. Exhibiting until 23 December
14	Writing workshop	Advanced Plotting Workshop, presented by acclaimed local writer Nikesh Muralli
25	Exhibition Opening	Introspect JCU Graduate Student Exhibition School of Creative Arts Exhibiting until 5 December
26	Exhibition opening	Christmas exhibition by local artists Exhibiting until 31 December 2010

October

Place	Time	Cost	Contact
Court Theatre, Cnr Sturt & Stokes Street	8 pm	\$18 full, \$12 concession/student	47211771 www.musiccentrenq.net
Main Space, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	7 pm	FREE	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au
Access Space, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	7 pm	FREE	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au
Vault Space, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	7 pm	FREE	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au
Studio Downstairs, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	10 am – 4 pm	Members \$100 Non-members \$130	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	6.00 pm	FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	5.30 pm	FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	7.00 pm	FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
Studio Downstairs, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	TBA	TBA	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au
Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	10am – 1pm	TBA	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au

November

Place	Time	Cost	Contact
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	7.00 pm	FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
Studio Downstairs, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	10 am – 3 pm	Members \$125 Non-members \$155	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au
Main Space, Umbrella Studio Contemporary Art, 482 Flinders Street, Townsville	7 pm	FREE	4772 7109 trainee@umbrella.org.au
Writers in Townsville	TBA	TBA	www.witsnq.blogspot.com
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Cnr Denham St & Flinders Mall, Townsville	7.00 pm	FREE	4727 9011 ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au
Sylvia Ditchburn Fine Art Gallery 7 Metro Quays, 86 Ogden Street Townsville	6 pm light refreshments	FREE	4724 3953 Sylvia.ditchburn@bigpond.com.au

Semi-Permanent 2010

FURT FONG

As I approached the mass of concrete and glass also known as the Brisbane Exhibition Centre I felt a strange feeling creeping up inside me. I recognised this feeling to be 'safe' but I was still very uncomfortable. I felt invisible. My skinny jeans, grandpa slippers and bright woollen jumper would have got a second glance if I'd walked through Finders Street Mall. But suddenly when I was among the über keen designers, artists and photographers who had congregated in Brisbane, I looked like your average Joe. I was drowned out in a sea of expressive personal style.

I had come to Brisbane to experience *Semi-Permanent*, a conference held each year in the capital cities that brought prominent graphic designers, artists, photographers, publishers and many others to speak to eager creatives. These guys were definitely able to draw a crowd. *Semi-Permanent* had sold out one week prior. My pushing and shoving through the crowd had paid off. I was able to find a seat before the lights went out. As I squinted through the darkness I could see people sitting on the stairs and standing along aisles. This was a determined audience.

The line-up of speakers played like an underground festival. You might have heard of some of the acts but there were a lot that you wouldn't know about unless you listened to Triple J at 1 am every Saturday. Frankie Magazine, Frost Design and Illoura were what you could call 'the headliners'. The lesser known, but still very respected, artists were Mymo, Toben, Stephen Dupont, Alexia Sinclair and Jasper Goodall. All of these speakers were amazing.

The main drive of *Semi-Permanent* is to get creative people talking about being creative. One of the attractions of this event is hearing how these artists process their creativity into their livelihood and how they are able to navigate through the creative industries. This is most probably why a younger audience was drawn in. Eager students, graduates and even amateurs were

here to listen to the best in the business talk about how they established themselves and are able to keep their creativity thriving despite living the life of a struggling artist. The three artists that left an impression on me were Toben, Stephen Dupont and Alexia Sinclair.

Toben are an arts collective that work in music, fashion and exhibitions and promotions. Much of their work is album covers for different musicians. Whenever they put an album cover together, they work with the musicians in their rehearsal space to get a feel for the music and how they'll be able to represent the sound of the album in one image. Another of Toben's projects was the trophy for the Jack Awards. The awards show, which is sponsored by Jack Daniels, rewards live Australian music. Toben's initial idea for the trophy was ice crystals and how they reflect and refract light. Using this idea as their basis, they drew some sketches and developed those into drawings that were

'...to get creative people talking about being creative...'

used by an engineer to construct a huge statue of the trophy. Toben show how a group of artists with different specialties can come together with the same vision and produce a great product—better than they'd be able to do on their own.

Stephen Dupont is an artist whose work is usually individual. As a photojournalist, Stephen has worked since the early 90s in different locations but has always been drawn back to the Middle East. His work has covered the conflict in Afghanistan and followed the rise of the Taliban. As a photojournalist he feels that the camera is your pen. For people wanting to become a photojournalist, he wants you to ask yourself the question—'How can I help the world?' Stephen has many books published that focus on his different assignments.

Alexia Sinclair is also a photographer but she is also a digital artist. Stephen



takes photographs as they are without any manipulation, whereas Alexia tweaks and adds and removes different elements to her images to produce her own individual artwork. Having been trained at the National Art School, Alexia

acquired her Master of Fine Arts and Digital Media. She bases her artworks on a known narrative to act as way to hook the viewer. Her influences include Caravaggio and Botticelli. These show through, particularly in her collection titled *The Regal Twelve*. In this collection, Alexia has taken well-known female leaders throughout history and told their story through her photo-montages.

The most valuable part of *Semi-Permanent* was being reassured that, as an emerging designer, I have a place in the world. And if there isn't a place for me, I can definitely make my own. As I left the exhibition centre I didn't feel quite so boring in my skinny jeans, grandpa slippers and bright woollen jumper.

Semi-Permanent will be in Melbourne on 17–18 September and in Perth on 24 September.



Uli Liessmann, *Party Time*, 2010, Oil on paper, 330 x 150 cm, Courtesy of the artist

Uli Liessmann *Love, Lust and Laughter*

LORI HURST

Uli Liessmann's exhibition at Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts, aptly named *Love, Lust and Laughter*, was officially opened by well-known artist and gallery owner Dr Sylvia Ditchburn. Indicating the bevy of scantily clad models, Sylvia declared that her feather boa was as far as she was prepared to go with regards to the theme. With her wicked sense of humour, she drew everyone's attention to the uncanny resemblance between a completely nude redhead in one of the pictures and our very new prime minister—right down to the hairstyle and the nose. Uli swears it was sheer coincidence.

Love, Lust and Laughter, a delicious and provocative three-course offering, tempted the palate and stirred the imagination. Like Alice in Wonderland, once through the door you were drawn into a world where nothing is quite what it seems. An artist of Uli's persuasion has a view of life rather different from that of us mere mortals.

The Lineup, best described as burlesque-style art, was inspired by the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, a deliciously colourful, larger-than-life

depiction of uncensored, sensual pleasure. His provocatively clad women, striking in their bold stance against convention, convey a passion for life and the reality of differing sexual proclivities. Uli's portrayal is an understatement that makes it even more powerful.

His work is voyeuristic in the sense that it cuts through the layers of urban convention to the bare bones of reality. At first, second or even third glance, *Pushing the Right Button* appears as a depiction of the Oedipus complex. However, Uli explained that the picture is intended as an insight into the often humorous, sometimes frustrating, almost impossible, attempts by men to understand the workings of a woman's mind.

Of course, all art is in the eye of the beholder. One art lover suggested his confrontational style might be disturbing to some individuals. In thanking her for her comment, Uli expressed the opinion that feedback—either positive or negative—was infinitely better than having your work ignored, as someone passed by without a second glance.

As a writer, standing back watching viewers' expressions just wasn't enough. Intrigued, curious, I wanted to know their thoughts, to delve into their minds. What reactions, responses had Uli's art evoked. I approached several people who I knew to be fellow artists.

Lynn Scott Cumming described Uli's work as joyful and commended his free expression and ability to drape a form. Emmanuel McCarthy commented that, 'An abundance of cleavage larrikinism and a splendid delivery of stylised characters makes for a swell show'. Rosa Christian agreed that some might find Uli's work confronting but she thought the general theme was good fun. She admired his style and his choice of medium—thin oil on paper.

Like all of Uli Liessmann's work, love it or hate it, you cannot ignore it. His characters are imbued with a life of their own. Depicted on the cover of *A Moveable Feast*, presented by Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts, *The Party Time* cellist, uninhibited and unrestrained, plays on.



Photograph by Kristof Schrader



Kristof Schrader

Unexpected photography career formed at JCU

Kristof Schrader

KURT FONG

Local James Cook University (JCU) student, Kristof Schrader, is about to complete three years of study in photography—a career he had never planned. I spoke to Kristof about what got him started in photography and where he hopes it will take him.

Kristof moved straight from high school into the Bachelor of New Media Arts at JCU. He had initially planned to major in Digital Sound and minor in Digital Photography. He explained:

My interest in photography grew tremendously when I picked up my first SLR. What got me completely absorbed in the study were discussions with digital imaging lecturers and a subsequent internship with a local wedding photographer.

Kristof has since moved on to study Digital Photography and Journalism together. Although Kristof isn't studying Digital Sound, he still enjoys listening to and playing music when he can. He

hopes to work in news media and utilise his skills in these areas:

But more than anything I want to work as a successful freelance photographer—specialising in weddings, creative portraiture and commercial photography—as it is my passion creatively.

While studying, Kristof also works as a freelance photographer. His photography business and university assignments help him to build his portfolio.

Being a student in the creative industries sector lends itself to building a portfolio naturally with the progression of completing assignments across each semester.

You might be able to catch a glimpse of Kristof's work at JCU's graduate exhibition titled *Introspect*, held at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery from 26 November until 5 November 2010.

Introspect will be an incredible event, I am certain of it. We have some amazing talents from various disciplines in our cohort, all of which have something special and unique to showcase as a result of their studies.

I myself want to challenge myself to make something entirely new in time for *Introspect*, but particularly look forward to seeing some of the great work that others come up with as well.

Kristof's work can be found at <http://photographybykristof.com>.

Lucy Smith: Palms and Kew Gardens

JACQUI STOCK

Sitting with Lucy Smith enjoying tea and biscuits in her small but lovely west London garden, we chatted about her life in Britain. We were surrounded by a wide variety of plants and I commented on a beautiful giant grass covering much of the space with its softly swaying spears. A smile curled at the corners of Lucy's mouth as she replied that it was one of her favourites also. It was easy to see how much her love of nature coloured her life and easy to imagine her in her role of freelance botanical illustrator at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, which houses one of the world's most comprehensive collections of plant species.

Even before graduating from James Cook University (JCU) of North Queensland, Lucy had shown a marked interest in this type of work, as shown in her Masters exhibition which concentrated on detailed, high-colour watercolour paintings of the palms of Australia.

These works, done in collaboration with JCU botanist, Dr John Dowe, who was aware of Lucy's level of expertise and her wish to travel, resulted in a letter of introduction to the botanists at Kew Gardens who had invited Dr Dowe to contribute to a proposed book on *The Palms of New Guinea*, or PONG as it is affectionately called at Kew. So, in 1999, Lucy travelled to London, portfolio and letters in hand.

It wasn't as simple as that, however. There was the matter of proving herself in order to be accepted as an illustrator at such a prestigious place and, not one to sit on her laurels, on arrival in London Lucy set about doing exactly that.

Like most of the jobs I've ever done, it was from personal canvassing that I started this work. I met with the botanists here at Kew, gave a slide show and talk about my work, and did a few trial run pieces of work for them so that they could judge whether I was up to standard. As all of the work is done on a freelance basis, I also had to build up other jobs to work on while there were quiet patches on PONG (it relies

on contributions from around 16 scientists worldwide, so the flow of species ready for illustration could be intermittent). So I began to work for other botanists at the Gardens and also to explore other painting and drawing work for exhibition and commissions.

Working for the Gardens has led Lucy into many and varied types of work, the majority of which consists of black and white drawings for publication in journals, and field guides, some

of which must be drawn using a microscope so as to accurately depict the complexity of the specimens collected by scientists from across the globe.

Once processed into the herbarium, they are studied in detail by the botanists, who then instruct me in detail on what parts of the plant to draw. In the case of palms, there may be a great difference in the scale of the parts I need to draw



Sample used for illustrations by Lucy Smith Photograph: Jacqui Stock

onto one 'plate'; for example, parts of a huge palm leaf will need to be scaled down or drawn whole from a photograph, while the tiny flowers from the same plant may need to be drawn using a microscope.

Due to quiet periods at the gardens waiting for specimens to be presented for illustration, Lucy has broadened her work base, giving talks and conducting workshops as well as illustrating for magazine's such as *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, a long running British botanical journal.

I give talks and conduct workshops for Botanical Art societies around the UK, and have just started teaching part of a Diploma course. Occasionally, I also do some work for the Natural History Museum also in London, again illustrating new species. A few years ago I had a great time running a workshop for The Big Draw event in London, getting the public into drawing by providing them with plant and drawing material and microscopes.

Her most exciting experience to date was taking part in a BBC documentary following in the footsteps of Captain Cook, Joseph Banks and botanical artist Sydney Parkinson on a replica of the HMS *Endeavour*, although meeting Sir David Attenborough when he was visiting the Gardens certainly ranked highly.

It is with some surprise that Lucy has found herself still in London 10 years later and still working on the proposed PONG project. She is still broadening her horizons, exhibiting in such places as the Royal Horticultural Society in their show featuring botanical art, and hopes to exhibit more in the future.

I hope to exhibit at Kew Gardens next year in a group show. I have produced two largish-scale drawings for this already. They are a bit of a departure for me as they are pencil drawings which I worked up from what were going to be preparatory drawings for watercolour painting. I enjoyed the drawing part so much that I decided to carry on with the pencil work instead.

Other work that I do consists of paintings and drawings for private commission and exhibition, which is

not usually for publication as such. My work for the BBC documentary was used for the book on the series.

Lucy revels in the variety of work and the opportunities they present.

Sometimes the discoveries are really exciting, and I feel as though I'm taking part in the discovery and description of a new species or even genus. This occurred recently when material was received from Madagascar of a previously unrecorded, massive and spectacular palm. It turned out to be an entire new genus and attracted a lot of publicity. I drew and painted it for many applications—the original pen and ink drawing describing it as new to science; detailed ink wash drawings for a book on all of the palm genera in the world; and, finally, a commission to paint the palm and all of its details, which I then turned into a print run.

Her love of London and her life there is obvious.

Perhaps the greatest surprise of all is that I fell in love with London itself and find it hard to imagine dragging myself and family away. This is helped, of course, by the fact that we live in a lovely part on the edge of London, with plenty of green spaces and a cycle or walk commute to work. Also I love visiting all of the museums and galleries—they are such an inspiration and there are so many opportunities in such a large and vibrant city!

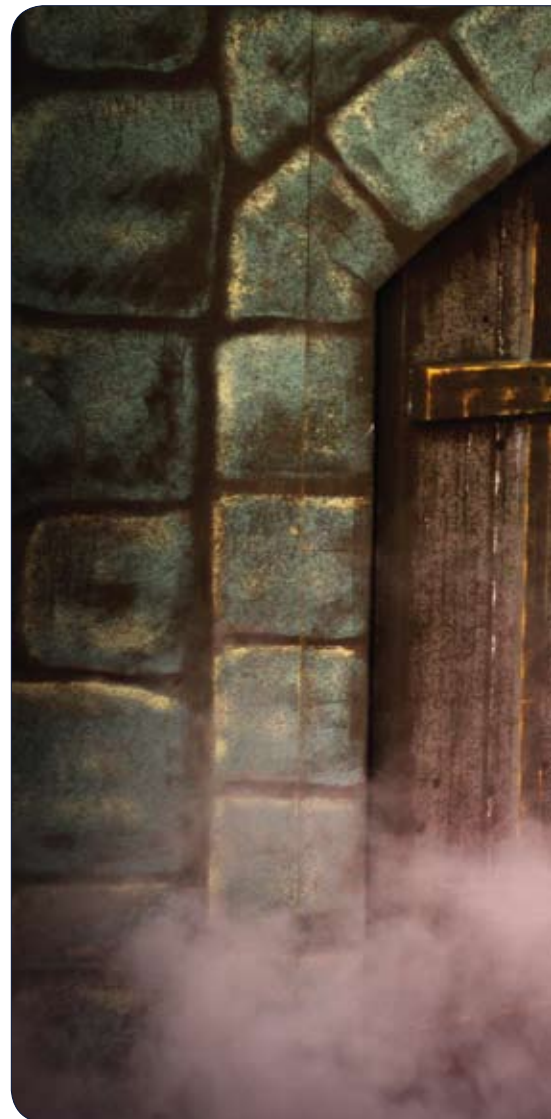
In the past 10 years Lucy has married a botanist also working for the Gardens, and expanded her family further with the birth of her lovely daughter Leila, now aged seven. With this in mind I asked Lucy where she saw herself in 10 years time. She answered wistfully, speaking of her love for both Australia and the UK:

Hmm ... Professionally, working on some dream projects rather than doing the same kind of illustrations I have been doing for the past ten years. Ideally, I would like to reconnect with my home country through my work in a similar way as I started out in this field with my work on the palms of North Queensland. There are a few interesting

possibilities that I am exploring at the moment which involve plant material grown here at Kew, which originated in Australia.

I visit Australia with my family every two years, and this is the question I am constantly asked (and ask of myself as well). I cannot imagine never living in Australia again. There is a primal need within me to be connected to the landscape of home that often feels neglected, so at some point that will need some attention. But for the moment I suppose I am still an indefinite expat.

Her connection with Australia for the moment are the two *Eucalyptus* trees viewed waving in the breeze over her back fence and contact with friends and family. Lucy Smith has come a long way since graduating with a Masters in Visual Arts from JCU and her story illustrates the possibilities when life is seized and boundaries are disregarded.





Sharon Ransom as Lady of the Lake, *Spamalot*, Courtesy of Townsville Choral Society, Photograph: Sonia Warrell

Monty Python's *Spamalot*

EBONY PRIEST

A night at the theatre has never been so much fun as with the Townsville Choral Society's production of Monty Python's *Spamalot*. The directing team, led by Karen Vane, certainly had a talented cast to work with, and their individual comic charms worked very well together on the stage.

Monty Python's *Spamalot*, as the promotion unashamedly pointed out, is 'lovingly ripped off' from Monty Python's 1974 movie the *Holy Grail*. It follows King Arthur and his knights of Camelot on their quest for the Holy Grail; a quest that takes many a zany and sometimes inexplicable turn. Of course, any Monty Python fan worth their salt would expect nothing less.

Recognition must first go to the team of set designers and constructors for

the remarkable scene that greeted the audience immediately upon entering the auditorium. Two castle wings complete with windows and drop gate were outstanding, and the clever use of the central stage piece rotating throughout the show made for seamless scene changes in keeping with the production's witty pace.

On the stage, the actors were obviously well rehearsed and had their characterisations down pat. True to Python style, several actors appeared as different characters throughout the night and, as testament to their skill, my guest and I found many occasions where we disagreed on who was playing whom at any one time.

If familiar with the *Holy Grail* movie, an audience member would easily be

delighted by the inclusion of favourites such as the Knights of Ni and the dismemberment of the Black Knight ('it's only a flesh wound!'), and most certainly the taunting of the relentless French guard, who was played flawlessly by a costume-hopping Robert Onslow. Furthermore, although not originally from the *Holy Grail*, the addition of the toe-tapping musical number *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life* was well received by an audience that happily sang along and whistled (to the best of their abilities) with the cast on stage.

Compliments must go to the male ensemble as a whole; their voices were strong and confident, and the tone produced by their numbers together was exceptional. The lead knights each had excellent solos/duets, with Galahad's duet with the Lady of the Lake (*The*

Song that Goes like This) being a sure stand-out—for the vocals as much as for Galahad's outbursts throughout.

Without a doubt, the crowd favourite among a talented cast was Brian Edmond as Patsy. First-class coconut clapping and swiftness of feet had the audience in hysterics before even a line was uttered. Edmond's clear grasp of the understated comedy of his character was a credit to him, and his performance was perfect.

Patrick Higgins, as the great King Arthur, did remarkably well with the lead role; his effortless transitions between pompous nobility and hip-swinging joviality were a joy to watch. Neil Ivett, Andrew Higgins, Michael Gleeson and Robert Onslow—as Arthur's knights—were highly commendable. The balance of their characters was executed to a tee, and the chemistry between them was obvious. The musical introduction to King Arthur's court, *Knights of the Round Table*, was a riot of Vegas-worthy

colour with plenty of impressive dancing by the knights and ensemble.

Special mention must go to Sharon Ransom as the vocally acrobatic Lady of the Lake. Sharon's skill as a singer was well balanced with her comic ability in playing the mystical diva. I must also commend a very entertaining James Raggatt, who played several wonderful characters, for his ability to switch from peasant, to prince, to minstrel and back again without skipping a beat.



From left: Patrick Higgins as King Arthur, Brian Edmond as Patsy, *Spamalot*, Courtesy of Townsville Choral Society, Photograph: Sonia Warrell

The Skin is the Enemy

(Short fiction) NIKESH MURALI

She waited for him, scratching her arms, at dusk. She had never had a man. No man would make love to her while her skin peeled away and floated in the air like parachutes over Normandy. This one was different. He was keen. She was honest on the dating site: 'Have skin disorder. Is lonely. Need company'. He had responded: 'I am lonely too. Everyone shuns me'. She woke up early that day and sat scratching on the bed for half an hour before heading off to the kitchen for breakfast. While washing dishes she caught a sympathetic smile from the lady next door who was pruning her roses.

'How pretty they look without their unwanted bits', she shouted over the fence.

She listened to old vinyl discs, and for a few hours Mozart replaced the sound of nails scraping against her inflamed dermis. She cleaned her wounds and watched a game show at midday, the one where the host never failed to shout 'Have we got a winner or what?' every time he picked a busty blonde from the audience. She had pumpkin quiche for lunch and spent more time playing with the pastry than actually eating it. They always looked unappetising once the

top layer was removed. She bathed in a tub filled with special minerals and once she had dried off, she smeared herself with gel to calm her skin. She put on a see-through cotton skirt and shirt, and checked her figure in the mirror. She powdered her tomato red skin and wore non-allergenic lipstick made from vegetable extracts. And finally, she said a little prayer to the silence in the house. She waited for him at the doorstep in the approaching night.

Just as the title music from a 15-year-old soap opera came on the television sets in the neighbourhood, a tall figure

The cast as a whole had a wonderful energy from beginning to end, and the vocal support of the backstage choir was a welcome addition to an otherwise small ensemble. The choreography by Megan Qualishefski suited the bumbling nature of the characters and kept the show perfectly in Python territory. Coconut-assisted tap dancing and an unexpected dance by a nun and monk attracted particularly strong responses from an enthusiastic audience.

In a show packed with colour and comedy, random characters and unexpected turns in plot, I was pleased to see that every member of the cast was quite obviously having a genuinely good time; this enthusiasm for their roles ensured that the audience enjoyed it in equal measure.

In short, the Choral Society's production was an extremely entertaining evening that left everyone that watched it with a broad smile and aching ribs from lengthy and heartfelt laughter. And, at the end of the day, I think its lasting message is clear: find your own grail and, of course, always look on the bright side of life.

holding a bouquet opened the gate and stepped into the yard. She stopped breathing and listened to the beating of her heart. He hesitated and shifted the flowers to his other hand. She heard him scratching, and she smiled.

The Prize

(Short fiction) ANITA BERRY

Old Bill was a regular at the pub. Every night as I walked past the open door I would see 'is five foot nothing frame perched on the stool like a rooster on tree stump.

He was a scrawny sort of a guy, all angles and folds of skin, a bit like a half-deflated balloon left in the sun too long. But his heart made up for his lack of size.

He was a real bargain hunter and loved to show off his newest acquisitions. When I knew he'd been out hunting at the dump, I'd try to hurry by before he saw me and called me to come and have a gander at his latest prize. Cause, I knew if I went in the old bugger would ply me with too much beer and I'd go home with a headache and something I never wanted. There was only one thing I wanted from Bill and that was never for sale.

I'd give anything (well almost) to have 'im sitting on that stool waiting to bushwhack me with his second-hand prizes. But I guess a lot has changed since that snake got 'im at the creek. And ya can't turn time back even if ya want to.

We'd been mates for 65 years. From the day we first started school we'd shared the same classes, joined the same football teams, we piggy-backed on my old horse and then later when he bought his first car it was his turn to cart me around. We did the rounds then of the local circuit—two young men with brilliantined hair sluiced back like an oil slick and ponging like one of those fancy toilet cleaners they have hanging in the dunny nowadays.

The girls loved us and we were never short of a good time as we went whooping and bumping down the country roads, a trail of dust following us to the races, down the coast and the surf or across the hills to the Saturday night dances.

That's where we met Sarah and fell in love with her red hair and chestnut

brown eyes. She had the best legs in the district and with her kind eyes and hearty laugh she lit up my heart. But Bill was older by 6 months and I guess that gave him the advantage, because once she saw him I had no chance. And for the first time since we were kids we didn't agree about something. I wanted her and so did he, but she chose him. I was his best man, stood there proud as punch, hiding my feelings behind a stupid grin and passed the ring with a steady hand.

I never married, and I thought I'd hidden the reason. Not that I didn't try to find another girl. But somehow, those eyes haunted me and I suppose nobody ever measures up to perfection.

But I guess Old Bill knew, because when the snake got 'im and he was breathing his last in the old creek bed, he grabbed me hand and passed me his wedding ring. 'Mate, it's your turn now', he whispered. 'That is if you're good enough. She's mighty fond of you.' Then he passed me his wedding ring and breathed his last.

I guess I was good enough and for the first time in me life I didn't mind getting one of Bill's hand-me-downs. Five years to the day, and Sarah and me have just got married. I'd never have asked her, but for that ring. It would have seemed disrespectful somehow. But Bill's gone now. And Sarah and I have learnt to fit into each others lives, comfortable like, sort of like putting on an old sweater on a chilly night. We're sitting here now on the porch watching the sun set. The family's all gone home and I guess we'll be turning in soon. I might be an old man, but there's still life in me yet. But have to admit to certain tightness in me chest. She's still got lovely eyes, and time has been good to her. Will I be man enough for her? I guess I will be though. Old Bill thought so, otherwise why would he offer me a chance to share the prize of his life.

Beyond the Black Stump

(Short fiction) KERRY ASHWIN

'Rayleen, Nalene, Doreen, Noreen and Dot. Right, all here.'

'Ow getonwithit Marg.'

'Well I'm just gettin' it straight that's all.'

The ladies sat around the wooden trestle table trying to bring decorum to the newly formed Willabee Mothers' and Babies Club 1966. They had been unceremoniously dumped at the back of beyond by their husbands when the copper boom hit and Willabee was a 'new' town. The town's planning consisted of an overpriced shop, a besser brick cube painted in leftover pukey green, which was the health centre, a working man's club and a sports hall.

'Now ladies, our first meeting should have some rules.' Marg adjusted her dress which was clinging in the heat. The six women sweated on the plastic moulded seats as their children, oblivious to the discomforts, played on the wooden floor. The euphemistically called sports hall was devoid of promise. The painted basketball lines had never been finished, the corrugated iron roof was pin-marked with missing nails and the few remaining sports equipment cupboards were bare. It was doing double duty as a community centre, but as Dot said many times to anyone who cared to listen,

'Community centres need a community, we got nothin' here, just a bunch of bloody ...' and she went on to her captive audience for a full five minutes.

'Ow God love us Dot', Rayleen said. 'Listen you yourself. You must be here for a reason, why don't cha let us all in on the secret Dot.' Rayleen baited the woman, knowing Dot wasn't married, and had one and another on the way.

'Just forget it', Dot said, fussing over her little Brenda in the pram.

'As I was saying ladies', Marg tried to bring the meeting back to some sense

of order. 'We need some sort of rules.' 'Rules in this God-forsaken place', Noreen took up the argument. She wasn't much interested in coming when she first heard of the meeting, and only decided at the last minute. She'd rather be in the gossip circle than the subject of it. She shifted little Tracy to her other knee and brushed a fly from her sleeping face. As the new arrival she had little kudos in the group, and with big city ideas she was seen as a threat. 'I tell you, in the city they didn't need rules. Everyone just ...', her rhetoric fell on deaf ears as the group collectively rolled their eyes. They had seen this very same scenario played out again and again as new people moved and tried to fit in.

'Well we ain't in the city now love, so you better get used to the way we do things.' After the lashing at the hands of Rayleen, Dot needed a victim.

'Why?', Noreen asked sarcastically.

'Cause your Bill is here for the money and the copper, and there ain't nothin' else. Just the money and copper', Dot poked a finger at the young woman while pushing her pram rhythmically.

'Now Noreen, it's not that bad really', Doreen giggled, a shy nervous giggle and blushed. She wrung her hanky in fidgety hands and looked at her friend Rayleen for support.

'Ow get out of it Dor. You don't call this ...', Rayleen flipped her baby onto her shoulder with the practised air of a mother of four and she spread her free arm wide, '...this place Shangri-bloody-la'.

'Well all I'm saying Ray, is that it's what you make it, that's all I'm saying', Doreen smoothed her new nylon skirt, the material almost sparking with static. She called up her Keith who was guzzling warm cool-aid straight from a Tupperware jug. Doreen had come to Willabee for the adventure she kept telling herself, but the truth was

just under the surface. Nanna Beth's influence, Doreen hoped, would never stretch as far as beyond the black stump, and her marriage might just flourish.

Nalene smirked as the arguments began. Her twins Kathy and Craig screamed in the far corner as Marg's Roger bullied them into handing over their Sao's with limp cheese. Nalene had a cynical view of groups, especially groups of women. The last three townships she lived in all had the same ideas. Avon, Tupperware and book clubs all started with a bright idea but died on the vine when, as Frank Sinatra sang, 'I did it my way' took over and there were too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

'Craig, Kathy', Nalene shouted and the twins bolted to their mother's side, like whippets out of the traps. They reached their mother and clung to her arms as she fished in her bag for their bribe to be good.

'Wait a minute', she said as Craig began hopping from one foot to another in anticipation. Nalene produced a small packet of FAGS for her children and then produced a packet of Rothmans for herself.

'Now get lost you two', she said and lit up her cigarette and watched her kids begin to taunt Roger with their lollies.

'The carrot and the stick', Nalene said to the group knowing they would hardly see the analogy with their new Mothers' and Babies Club.

'Yeah, ain't it the truth', Rayleen said patting her baby on the back adding, 'works for my Trev too.' Nalene and Ray shared a moment of undeniable truth.

'What do you mean?'

'Jeez, Dor, where you been hiding. Or should I ask, how long you been married to Dave?', Rayleen asked. Doreen blushed and smoothed her skirt

once again. She pulled Keith a little closer to fend off the impending attack from Ray. As next-door neighbours they lived each other's lives and Rayleen knew very well how long she had been married, but the thrill of the chase and the kill always sent Ray into overdrive.

'Long enough to know Dave doesn't eat carrots.' The innocent reply sent Nalene and Ray into hysterics.

'You want a ciggie?' Nalene offered the Rothman's packet to Ray, who took up the offer, setting the friendship like a weekly perm.

'Willabee mothers, please', Marg said trying to keep a bit of order. She had

the added advantage of being the first to arrive at Willabee, and this carried weight around the town. Mal and Marg ran the shop, robbing the captive audience blind without a conscience. Some said they picked the eyes out of the fresh fruit and veg that made the long road trip to Willabee, but Marg had the hide of a rhinoceros and the innuendo and rumours were like water off a duck's back. Her little Roger would never go without. She sat up pushing Roger off her lap and reiterated her plea. 'Come on Willabee ladies, let's get going',

'Willabee, more like Wannabee', Rayleen said slumping in her chair.
'Wannabee somewhere else', Nalene

ended, and they all sat, knowing it was true, as the flies crawled over the lamingtons and the kiddies ate dirt.



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